

*They said it
couldn't be done*

McDonnel Finds a Way



Consider space limitations. If it's not possible to spread, it might be possible to stack. From bunk beds to rooftop gardens to office towers, the success of the approach is illustrated again and again.

But imagine that stacking is not a matter of choice, but a requirement. Franchisees of Bed Bath & Beyond must have a signature, two-story appearance. The visual image of Bed Bath & Beyond is striking because the façade hints at the appearance of tiered, fluffy towels or a folded down comforter.

Rising to the Challenge

Yet what happens if a second story is needed in an existing structure and some engineers say it cannot be done? As it commenced an expansion and renovation project, Clearview Mall, owned by Richards Clearview, L.L.C., New Orleans, hit just such an obstacle. Given that Bed Bath & Beyond would occupy a sizable portion of the mall, there was a strong commitment to finding a way to accommodate Bed Bath & Beyond with the configuration it needed.

The Clearview Mall turned to The McDonnel Group, which was eager to find a way to make things work. "They'd been to two or three other contractors," says Allan McDonnel, president of The McDonnel Group. McDonnel explains that his firm places a premium on its can-do attitude and its ability to solve complex problems.

One of the first challenges was to find a way to meet the structural requirements of adding a second story without forcing existing tenants to move goods and shelving from the Clearview Mall during construction. The owner would have faced a high price tag for the relocation, approximately \$500,000.

But The McDonnel Group came up with a design that allowed the second floor to be created over the existing roof. Pitch pockets were installed and stub columns were added. In short, the tenants of Clearview Mall had weather protection for their existing square footage and were not required to temporarily relocate inventory or shelving.

Location, Location, Location

Clearview Mall is a prime place to be anchored. The original mall was built in 1971. The \$64-million expansion

and renovation that was completed in 2002 transformed the facility. The mall now offers a 700,000-square-foot space for retailers and buyers to meet.

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Bed Bath & Beyond, which opened in October 2002, occupies a 50,000-square-foot area. “The store is a great fit for the mall because of its two stories of quality, contemporary merchandise for the home,” says Joy Patin, a spokesperson for Clearview Mall.

The component of the mall project that The McDonnell Group completed encompassed the addition of the second floor for Bed Bath & Beyond. The project cost for that portion of the renovation and expansion was \$4.7 million.

The location of the mall makes it a good place to be in business as well. Patin says the traffic count for the intersection of Clearview and Veterans Boulevard, where the mall is situated, exceeds 381,000 cars per day.

Design-Build Strategies

Instead of using a third-party general contractor approach, the mall owner moved to a design-build strategy. That put The McDonnell Group in the position of helping out all along the path to the final product.

Obviously, existing tenants can have some apprehension about getting bigger, adding tenants, and possibly installing competitors. So a good conceptual analysis helps to calm tenant concerns by showing them that more customer foot traffic is a positive thing. Moreover, great curb appeal brings in lookers who often stop and buy.

The McDonnell Group provided a conceptual budget analysis to assist the mall owner in lease negotiations. The analysis included feasibility studies, market analysis, traffic flow patterns, municipal appeals, and zoning studies that related to potential parking concerns.

The efforts of The McDonnell Group on behalf of the Clearview Mall grew once the concept was in place.

The McDonnell Group ensured that the architectural design was aligned with the desires of the owner. It brought the mechanical and electrical trades into the project. The McDonnell Group also obtained all the necessary approvals from government entities.

Keeping tenants thoroughly informed is a good way to make certain they have a clear understanding of what is happening around them and when it’s going to happen. The McDonnell Group provided updates to all tenants at appropriate intervals. Instead of one tenant hearing about a project step from another tenant, all the tenants heard about it at the same time.

Mathes Brierre Architects, New Orleans, was the architect for the Bed Bath & Beyond project. The McDonnell Group often works with the firm. “The most challenging part of the Bed Bath & Beyond project,” says Edward Mathes, chairman of Mathes Brierre Architects, “was accommodating the specific design by Bed Bath & Beyond within the existing space of the shopping center.”



The cart carrier and escalator are side-by-side providing customers the convenience of transporting their shopping carts to the second floor via escalator.

Not only does Bed Bath & Beyond give a distinctive look to the entire Clearview Mall, but it also has a feature that gives it a structural distinction. The store is only the second in Louisiana to have a cart carrier (an escalator that takes shopping carts to the second floor). For people stocking up with towels, sheets, and bedding-in-a-bag purchases, the carts are a must.

“Retailers are enjoying brisk sales since completion of the renovation,” says Patin. The new space, new look, and new stores have attracted a lot of attention for the enclosed regional mall. The Clearview Mall is important to the economic vitality of suburban New Orleans, and The McDonnell Group is delighted to have played a major role in this project. •